

Message Text

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POUCHED INFO ALL CONSULATES IN CANADA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJ: BILINGUALISM CONTROVERSY JUST WILL NOT GO AWAY

REF: A. OTTAWA 3356

B. MONTREAL 1186

C. OTTAWA 2691

D. OTTAWA 2622

1. SUMMARY: THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT CLEARLY HAD HOPED THAT THERE WOULD BE A COOLING-OFF PERIOD AFTER THE QUEBEC AIR TRAFFIC CRISIS IN JUNE UNTIL THE REPORT OF THE THREE-JUDGE COMMISSION ON BILINGUALISM AND AIR SAFETY WAS RELEASED BY THE END OF THE YEAR (OR LATER) OR, AT THE LEAST, THROUGH THE SUMMER (REF C). THIS PERIOD OF RELATIVE CALM WOULD ALLOW AN INTERLUDE IN WHICH FEDERAL MINISTERS COULD BE DISPATCHED AROUND THE COUNTRY IN A CAMPAIGN TO RE-EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ON THE BENEFITS, INDEED NECESSITY OF A BILINGUAL CANADA. THIS GOVERNMENT HOPE HAS PROVED TO BE UNFOUNDED. BILINGUAL INCIDENT AFTER INCIDENT HAS POPPED UP DURING THE SUMMER, KEEPING THIS GUT ISSUE PROMINENTLY IN THE PUBLIC EYE. NO ONE INCIDENT HAS BEEN OF EARTH-SHAKING CONSEQUENCE BUT, TOGETHER, THEY HAVE SERVED AS A CONSTANT REMINDER THAT HOPES FOR A BREATHING SPACE WITH
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AN EMOTIONAL ITEM LIKE THIS ONE IS SO MUCH WISHFUL

THINKING. END SUMMARY.

2. EVEN AS LIBERAL MINISTERS HAVE BEEN DELIVERING REASONED SPEECHES ON THE BENEFITS OF BILINGUALISM, A MAJOR MOVING FORCE IN FOCUSING ATTENTION ON THE MOST TOUCHY ISSUE, USE OF FRENCH IN QUEBEC SKIES, EMERGED FROM THE LIBERAL BACK BENCHES. SERGE JOYAL, A YOUNG AND EXCEPTIONALLY ABLE LIBERAL MP FROM MONTREAL, HAS BEEN UNRELENTING IN PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE LANGUAGE-IN-THE-AIR QUESTION. ADDING TO HIS STEADY STREAM OF CRITICISM, JOYAL INITIATED TWO COURT ACTIONS, ONE CHALLENGING MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT REGULATIONS WHICH RESTRICT THE USE OF FRENCH IN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL AND THE OTHER AGAINST AIR CANADA FOR ITS DIRECTIVES RESTRICTING THE USE OF FRENCH IN THE AIR. IN YET ANOTHER WRINKLE, JOYAL THEN ASKED PM TRUDEAU WHETHER HE (JOYAL) SHOULD RESIGN FROM THE LIBERAL CAUCUS IN VIEW OF HIS JUDICIAL CHALLENGE TO THE GOVERNMENT. TRUDEAU, AVOIDING A DIRECT RESPONSE, TOLD REPORTERS, "I DON'T KNOW WHAT HIS PROBLEM IS".

3. JOYAL'S HAS NOT BEEN THE ONLY CRITICAL VOICE IN THE LIBERAL CAUCUS. PIERRE DE BANE, LIBERAL MP FROM THE RURAL MATANE RIDING, ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD RESIGN HIS SEAT IF THE COMMISSION STUDYING BILINGUAL AIR COMMUNICATIONS FOUND THAT BILINGUALISM IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH AIR SAFETY. DE BANE HAS ALSO JOINED JOYAL AND THE ASSOCIATION DES GENS DE L'AIR, AND ORGANIZATION REPRESENTING SOME FRANCOPHONE PILOTS, CONTROLLERS AND TECHNICIANS, IN A FEDERAL COURT PETITION TO OVERTURN THE FEDERAL ORDER RESTRICTING FRENCH IN QUEBEC AIR COMMUNICATIONS.

4. COMMENT: THE JOYAL AND DE BANE ATTACK ON GOVERNMENT POLICY WOULD BE ONE THING IF THEY WERE MERELY FACES IN THE LIBERAL BACK-BENCH CROWD. IT IS QUITE ANOTHER AND ALL THE MORE SERIOUS SINCE THEY ARE RECOGNIZED HERE AS BEING AMONG THE MOST CAPABLE AND PROMISING OF THE YOUNG FRENCH-CANADIAN FEDERALISTS IN CONFIDENTIAL

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THE CAUCUS. END COMMENT.

5. LIBERAL GOVERNMENT MISERY HAS NOT COME ONLY FROM ITS BACK-BENCHES. AS REPORTED IN REF B, QUEBEC MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE GUY SAINT-PIERRE, IN A LA PRESSE INTERVIEW, DEPLORED THE SURGE OF ENGLISH-CANADIAN RACISM WHILE FLIRTING WITH THE INDEPENDENCE OPTION. CONTEMPORANEOUSLY (BUT COINCIDENTALLY), THE

BIBEAU REPORT, COMMISSIONED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, WAS RELEASED WITH LENGTHY AND HIGHLY CRITICAL COMMENT ON THE GOVERNMENT'S BILINGUAL PROGRAM (REF A).

6. THE CANADIAN JUDICIARY HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN THE CONTINUING HIGH BILINGUALISM PROFILE. A FEDERAL COURT JUDGE, CONSIDERING THE CASE OF TWO AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS WHO HAD DEFIED A JUDICIAL BACK-TO-WORK ORDER DURING THE JUNE AIR STRIKE, FOUND THEM IN TECHNICAL CONTEMPT OF COURT BUT IMPOSED NO PENALTY. HIS LENIENCY WAS BASED ON A FINDING THAT THEIR ACTIONS WERE DICTATED BY, "WHAT YOU THOUGHT TO BE AN IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE". IN ANOTHER INCIDENT, AN ONTARIO PROVINCIAL JUDGE REBUKED A UNI-LINGUAL FRENCH-CANADIAN DEFENDANT FOR NOT SPEAKING ENGLISH. ACCORDING TO THE COURT TRANSCRIPT, HE ASKED IF SHE WAS AWARE THAT, "CANADA IS AN ANGLO-SAXON COUNTRU" AND SAID " IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT YOUR HAVEN'T LEARNED ENGLISH, WHICH IS THE LANGUAGE OF THIS COUNTRY". AFTER UNCOMPLIMENTARY MEDIA ATTENTION, HIS APOLOGY WAS QUICKLY FORTHCOMING.

7. COMMENT: IN VIEW OF THE INTENSITY OF RACIAL ANIMOSITY STIRRED UP DURING THE JUSE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CRISIS (REF C), A POLL SAMPLING SHOWING THAT CANADA'S "ETHNIC MOSAIC IS FRAGILE" COMES AS NO GREAT SURPRISE. WELL AWARE THAT THE CONCEPT OF BILINGUALISM IS ON SHAKY UNDERPINNINGS IN THIS COUNTRY, THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT HAS EMBARKED ON A RE-EDUCATION CAMPAIGN WITH MINISTERIAL VISITS AND SELLING EFFORTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. CLEARLY, THE GOVERNMENT HAD HOPED THAT, IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE JUNE CRISIS, A CALM AFTER THE STORM WOULD SET IN AND THAT THEIR RE-EDUCATION EFFORTS WOULD SET A TONE OF DISPASSIONATE REASONABLENESS.
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QUITE OBVIOUSLY, THIS HOPE WAS UNFOUNDED AND, WE THINK, SOMEWHAT NAIVE. THE STEADY SUMMER FLOW OF NEWSWORTHY ITEMS ON THE SUBJECT, RANGING FROM A SERIOUS REVIEW LIKE THE BIBEAU REPORT TO THE UTTERANCES OF A MIS-GUIDED ONTARIO JUDGE, INDICATE THAT THE BILINGUALISM HASSLE WON'T GO AWAY, NOT EVEN FOR A MATTER OF MONTHS. AND THE OMINOUS FACT IS THAT THE STUPID QUIPS OF THAT ONTARIO JUDGE GET AT LEAST AS MUCH MEDIA ATTENTION AS DOES THE REASONED SPEECH OF A FEDERAL MINISTER. THIS IS A GUT ISSUE IN CANADA AND, FOR BETTER OR WORSE, IT LENDS ITSELF TO GUT REACTIONS.
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